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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL FROM AMBASSADOR HERBOLD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [SN](#)

SUBJECT: SINGAPORE SCENESETTER FOR A/S HILL

1. (SBU) We warmly welcome your December 14-15 visit to Singapore. Singapore's leadership highly values access to senior Washington policymakers and will regard your visit as a testament to the importance we attach to the relationship. They will be very interested in your views on developments in Asia and the U.S. role in the region and can be counted on to provide thoughtful views on questions such as terrorism in Southeast Asia and the rise of China. Your visit offers the opportunity to advance our counter-proliferation objectives with the GOS and to send a public message throughout the region of the United States' commitment here.

Strategic Partners, not Allies

2. (SBU) Our excellent relationship with Singapore is founded on a convergence of views on key strategic issues and substantial trade and investment ties. Singapore views a strong U.S. diplomatic, military, and economic presence in the region as essential to regional peace and prosperity. Singapore is a valuable logistics hub for U.S. forces and seeks greater interoperability with us, highlighted by its recent selection of the F-15T for its Next Generation Fighter. To expand our strong security ties, President Bush and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong signed the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) in July. As with our two-year old Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the SFA is designed to make a good relationship even better. To preserve its autonomy and credibility with its neighbors, however, Singapore limits its closeness to us. It specifically does not want to be a treaty ally; our military leases facilities from the GOS -- there are no U.S. "bases" on the island.

Terrorism and Non-proliferation

3. (SBU) Singapore is a reliable and highly capable partner in the Global War on Terrorism. In 2001, the GOS uncovered a plot by Jemaah Islamiya to bomb targets in Singapore, including this mission. Singapore continues to view itself as a high-profile terrorist target and the GOS regularly warns its citizens that a terrorist attack is inevitable. Singapore's leaders are concerned about the growth of radical Islam in Southeast Asia and the long-term threat to secular authority.

4. (SBU) Singapore is an active member in counterterrorist programs such as the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Container Security Initiative and is working with Malaysia and Indonesia to enhance maritime security in the Strait of Malacca. We have been working with Singapore -- a major transshipment hub -- to expand and tighten its export controls to bring them up to world class standards. As an IAEA board member, Singapore has supported our efforts to press Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

Regional Issues

5. (SBU) Singapore views the Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula as the most significant potential flash points in East Asia. In particular, GOS leaders worry that Taiwan could spark a conflict with China over perceived moves toward independence, but this concern has lessened over the last year. While less directly affected by the Korean Peninsula, Singaporean leaders will welcome your insights on the Six Party Talks and other ways we are trying to modify North Korean behavior. This offers an opportunity to highlight the importance of our non-proliferation objectives.

6. (SBU) Singapore supported an inclusive approach to the East Asia Summit and, in general, encourages outside powers to take an interest in Southeast Asia. The GOS frequently urges us to engage more with Indonesia and welcomes our resumption of military ties there.

Democracy?

7. (SBU) PM Lee is only the third head of government in Singapore's forty years and his People's Action Party retains a tight grip on power. The Singapore leadership openly

rejects the notion that Singapore should adopt a "western-style democracy" and is proud of its record of catapulting Singapore from the Third World to the First in only two generations. At the same time, the senior leadership recognizes the need for openness and creativity in an increasingly advanced services and knowledge-based economy. It is grappling with how to encourage that without loosening its control.

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